



National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf

Submission to the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005

Executive Summary

- Students with hearing loss are a heterogeneous group and there is no one-size-fits-all approach.
- The effect size of deafness on student learning is -0.61 which indicates deafness is very likely to have a negative impact on student achievement.
- Some education departments have an inclusive education policy that is supported by professional development, but this is inconsistent, particularly at the local level.
- Teachers of the Deaf (ToD) have an understanding of, and the ability to, make reasonable adjustments, however this is not always replicated in mainstream teachers. Often it is the ToD that guides mainstream teachers in making reasonable adjustments as they need to develop an understanding of the impact of a hearing loss.
- ToDs provide a level of support to students with a hearing loss within the parameters of the system in which they work. The level of support varies from state to state. In some states the level of support provided is minimal.
- Specialist support is needed within mainstream schools both for school staff to develop skills in this specialist area, and also to provide direct support for students who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) in order to ensure they progress in their learning and achieve at standard.
- The steps to make a complaint in the DSE are not clear, specific or user friendly. Part 8 in the Guidelines re harassment and victimisation is very general.
- Teachers of the Deaf often empower students and parents/caregivers to lead during transition periods because the school fails to recognise that parents/caregivers are the expert about their child.
- Those ToDs who do work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander DHH students and their families demonstrate sensitivity. It is important to understand how different Aboriginal groups see a hearing loss or other disability.
- When children who are DHH have no language, they need to develop a language before they can start to learn. Teachers of the Deaf are skilled in developing language and their input is vital to ensure students who are DHH have access to, and participate in, education.
- COVID-19 impacted the experiences of students who are significantly disadvantaged. In the future the vulnerable category should be broadened to include students who are DHH.
- As an organisation of professionals, we are acutely aware of the Disability Standards for Education. After having thoroughly reviewed and responded to the 2010 and 2015 reviews of the Disability Standards, we express a concern that they are too general and that individual disability needs are not addressed.
- Teachers of the Deaf include reference to the DDA and the DSE in presentations to, and discussions with, school staff.

- We recommend that:
 - every teacher, including replacement teachers, needs to complete a module on the Standards which could be linked to the NCCD website.
 - this training be a requirement of registration bodies for provisional teachers.
 - modules be developed for discrete disabilities to broaden understanding of
 - reasonable adjustments
 - on the same basis
 - training provided to parents/caregivers, so they understand and use the same language
- The Standards have the potential to help students with disability to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability, but schools do not always implement reasonable adjustments consistently.
- The Standards should help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disability to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability if it is enacted. However, a lack of knowledge, capacity and understanding often means the Standards are not enacted.
- There is a need to be more explicit about the wide range of reasonable adjustments that could be considered for students who are DHH in their education and for assessment. Schools generally do not understand what “on the same basis” means because of the frequent comment that adjustments are not fair on the other students.
- Changes to the Standards and suggestions for improving awareness of the Standards recommended by the organisation are listed in the body of the document.
- Regarding understanding and applying the Standards:
 - a great deal of information is on the NCCD website. Schools could be directed to this to help them support implementation of the Standards.
 - “reasonable adjustments” and “on the same basis” need specific explanations and long lists of possible adjustments to help schools understand that adjustments will vary for each individual student.
- The Guidance Notes are helpful, but an advisory process where advocacy bodies could provide a range of examples that could be referred to as a support for teachers and leaders in mainstream schools would be useful. This would include examples for children and young people who are DHH across the spectrum of hearing loss. NAATD would be pleased to contribute to this process.

Preface

Students with hearing loss include not only those fitted with hearing aids or who have received a cochlear implant, but also the large number of students on any given day in every classroom in every school who have auditory processing issues, or a conductive or fluctuating hearing loss which is not permanent, but which can affect their access to learning.

Differences between children and young people who are deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) are greater than the differences between hearing children and young people. "...deaf children differ from each other in all of the ways that hearing children do plus in the quality and quantity of early language they receive...; the breadth of their experience interacting with people and things in the world...; and possible physical, psychological, or brain-related issues associated with the medical or hereditary causes of their hearing status..." (Marschark & Hauser, 2012, pp. 5-6). Every student who is DHH is different, their needs are multifaceted and multiple difficulties require multiple solutions. In Rittel and Webber's (1973) term, they are "wicked problems" in that understanding the problem means being open to an unlimited number of approaches to meet the needs of each particular student who is DHH. Systems such as education departments or schools tend to take a broad-based approach to students with disabilities when specific approaches are needed to facilitate the growth and independence of each individual student. Students who are DHH have amazing potential and they should not be reduced to a "wicked problem" where they are considered to be "doing OK", with the unspoken subtext "for a deaf kid". The Disability Standards for Education and the Guidance Notes need to be explicit that teaching students who are DHH is not a one-size-fits-all solution.

John Hattie is well known for his work on effect size to help schools determine the variables that have the most impact on student learning. Less known, but equally as important, are the negative effect sizes which point to the most vulnerable learners. Deafness has a negative effect size on student learning of -0.61 which indicates deafness is very likely to have a negative impact on student achievement. (Corwin Visible Learning Plus, 2017, 2018).

Tell us about your experiences with students with disability

Enrolment and access: What has been your experience with students with disability accessing education?

It is not unusual for schools to refuse to enrol students because they don't believe they have the resources to implement reasonable adjustments. An example is a student who needs Auslan interpreting enrolling and the school realising their funding would be insufficient to employ a full-time interpreter, and suggest an alternate placement.

Education departments can promote inclusion in ways that lead to parents/caregivers thinking they "must" enrol their child in their local school. There is belief that all schools provide the differentiation of the curriculum and adjustments as do schools with Teachers of the Deaf on staff who work with students who are DHH on a daily basis. This has an impact, particularly on students who are DHH who use Auslan.

Some education departments have an inclusive education policy and this is supported by professional development for school leaders who then provide professional learning for staff. This training may not extend to staff at the front desk as parents/caregivers report being told that

a school nearby has more students with special needs, has more resources to support the student, for example, funds or staffing and “do it better”. Parents/caregivers can be turned away without engaging with the leadership of the school. It is unclear whether schools might be refusing to enrol students because they perceive it as is too difficult to implement reasonable adjustments, that they have had difficult experiences in the past, that they are unsure if the funding support they may receive, or another reason.

The policy is sound but issues arise with implementation in schools and the great variation at the local level. Schools seem to be aware of the Standards but not all implement them to the same degree. Difficulties arise when schools do not follow the guidelines or when processes change over time and effective approaches have not been documented.

Other state departments might have a tool for schools to use to see how inclusive they are. Depending on the outcome, there is a roadmap to follow for improvement.

Participation: Do you understand your obligations for making reasonable adjustments to ensure all students with disability can participate in education? This includes participating in courses and programs, the curriculum, and using facilities. Would you know how to consult with a student or parent / carer? If you have had experiences in making reasonable adjustments, tell us about this.

As a professional association we understand the Standards and issues for students with low incidence disabilities. Our state branches provide opportunities for professional learning and members attend professional learning being offered by RIDBC Renwick Centre and the Victorian Deaf Education Institute. In addition, teachers participate in webinars, courses and conferences being offered by education departments and professional associations to stay up to date and to pre-empt adjustments that might be necessary to implement initiatives with students who are DHH.

In mainstream schools it is Itinerant/Visiting Teachers or school-based Teachers of the Deaf who make recommendations about reasonable adjustments for students who are DHH.

Successful implementation depends on:

- the culture of the school and openness to support and advice
- how well they implement the principles of universal design for learning as adjustments need to be the first consideration, not an afterthought
- embedding some adjustments such as the consistent use of appropriate listening devices, translation of resources into Auslan or use of captioning in all classes

Frequently, teachers in schools don't know how to make reasonable adjustments and even if provided with guidance, adjustments may not be implemented. As recent COVID experiences have demonstrated, teachers were so busy organising online learning that they either did not consider students who are DHH at all or only after they had prepared their learning materials.

We understand and model the importance of documentation and continuity of implementation of changes in adjustments over time. Changes of staff in schools can mean the need to start again in educating them about the needs of students who are DHH and the adjustments required.

Unless these are recorded, they may not be implemented at a school or system level.

Teachers of the Deaf in whatever setting they work, consistently advocate for students who are DHH and their right to an accessible education through the provision of reasonable adjustments so they have access on the same basis as other students. We frequently find a lack of respect for our expertise and our knowledge of the students, despite our focus on meeting Standard 1 of the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers: Know students and how they learn. NAATD (2016) developed *Teacher of the Deaf Elaborations of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* which documents the skills and knowledge used by Teachers of the Deaf.

There can almost be a refusal to acknowledge the needs for students who are DHH and those with blindness or low vision in class but particularly when there are applications for special provision for Year 12 assessment. Teachers of the Deaf have been over-ruled by the Year 12 coordinator saying the student/s didn't need adjustments because they are doing so well already. They cannot be convinced that the student might be doing so well because of adjustments, or because they are working twice as hard to first understand, and then demonstrate their understanding. Another frequent refrain is that if adjustments were to be provided for the student, it would be unfair to the other students. This demonstrates not only a lack of understanding of the Standards, but also that adjustments are made to enable a student with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

Some education departments have clear guidelines as to what must be provided for evidence in applying for special provisions/adjustments for assessment but they tend to be disability specific. Eligibility might require meeting a certain criteria of hearing loss – and this varies, depending on the type of assessment – without recognising that any degree of hearing loss may have an impact on the students' speech perception, speech production, expressive and receptive language, reading comprehension and speed of reading.

The Standards are generic and don't offer enough guidance to take into account the particular needs of students who are DHH. It is important that specialists such as Teachers of the Deaf with additional qualifications in the education of children and young people who are DHH, frequently at Master's level, be involved in improvements to the implementation of the Standards. We could assist in developing an understanding of adjustments at more than a surface and practical level.

Supporting students: How have you appropriately supported students with disability during their education? This includes the student being able to access supports, including specialist resources.

Richard Lavoie* (n.d.) speaks about the difference between fairness/equality and equity in the classroom: " 'Fair' does not mean that every child gets the same treatment, but that every child gets what he or she needs." Today we could say " 'Equality' does not mean that every child gets the same treatment, but that every child gets what he or she needs to ensure equity." This distinction is important to counteract the belief which is frequently expressed that adjustments for one student are not fair on other students. This needs to be included and elaborated upon in the Guidance Notes.

We support children who are DHH and their parents/caregivers from birth through early intervention services through primary and secondary education and beyond. We use, model and advise teachers in mainstream schools about adjustments that are appropriate for each

particular student who is DHH, depending on their particular learning profile and what is necessary for access to learning on the same basis as their hearing peers.

Schools may not be aware about the existence of the Itinerant/Visiting Teacher service or that this support is available to schools and to students with or without funding under the department's policy for funding students with disabilities. The existence of support options should be clearly outlined by education departments. Not all education departments track where students DHH are being educated in order to target the schools to receive such advice.

The inclusion agenda has resulted in a reduction or elimination of Itinerant/Visiting Teachers. For example, in one state there are now only four Teachers of the Deaf working in this role. In another sector there are no Teachers of the Deaf. Instead of specialist support, education departments are looking to build capacity in mainstream schools but often the people providing this learning are not Teachers of the Deaf. This has the effect of reducing understanding to a one-size-fits-all approach when a multi-faceted approach is required for the complex needs of this vulnerable cohort.

The report on the review of the Program for Students with Disabilities in Victoria recognised that to enhance workforce capability in providing inclusive education, two approaches were needed: to provide all teachers with better training, and the need for more specialist assistance (Department of Education and Training, 2016, p. 75).

Specialist support is needed within mainstream schools for school staff and students who are DHH in order to ensure they progress in their learning and achieve at standard. While some students who are DHH achieve at or above standard many others may not perform as well as their hearing peers. The aim should be to close the gap. Specialist support is also needed to ensure students who are DHH are – and feel – included in school, and have deaf and hearing friends. The ultimate aim of school is for students who are DHH to progress to work or further education.

Under the NDIS, depending on the training and experience of case managers, parents/caregivers may not learn of the existence of the specialised support available from Teachers of the Deaf. In schools, funding might be used to “purchase” time with an integration/teacher aide who is frequently assigned the responsibility for providing specialist support for the student. This is in direct contradiction to best practice as outlined in Evidence for Learning (2019) and if aides are used in this way, they should add value to what teachers do, not replace them. Students who are DHH are more likely to have appropriate adjustments when teacher aides work collaboratively with a specialist Teacher of the Deaf.

It would be of benefit to professionals to provide links to the NCCD website and the case studies, although these could be broadened to include the complexities of learners who are DHH.

* See Appendix 1 for graphic examples of this concept.

Harassment or victimisation: Have you had a situation where one of your students with disability experienced harassment or victimisation? What steps did you take to address this?

Some examples of harassment or victimisation of students who are DHH are:

- Students are placed under considerable pressure when expected to watch videos that aren't captioned because the teacher says it is too hard to find one.
- Students provided with "busy work" which is beneath their level to work independently rather than being appropriately taught how to work independently.
- Put downs re the use of hearing aids, for example when a student who is DHH said it was too noisy in the classroom, the teacher said they should take their hearing aids off.
- When trying to enact a recommendation from the psychologist, the teacher refused, saying the student was "just playing on their hearing loss".

There is a likelihood of students who are DHH being the only one in a class or school with a hearing loss and not having real friendship groups. They do miss what is going on and so can become an easier target for bullying. A video was taken by another student of the student who is DHH being followed around with verbal bullying occurring because they couldn't hear what was being said.

Students who are DHH experience social isolation and mental health issues can arise. The numbers of people who are DHH experiencing mental health problems is thought to be at least 40% (Brown & Cornes, 2015). There is a significantly higher prevalence of social problems and thought problems in children and adolescents when compared to their hearing peers (Remine & Brown, 2010). Students who are DHH are always playing catch up, wondering if they are being talked about and this leads to anxiety and low self-esteem. They may report feeling left out and not belonging to their school or their family because of the pace of communication and the frequency of missing out on information.

There are many examples of Teachers of the Deaf raising issues they have observed with class teachers and the principal, and not being supported. There is a lack of support from schools and the education systems and the Teacher of the Deaf may lose standing as an advocate for their students, particularly if they have made teachers and/or the leadership in the school aware of their responsibilities under the DDA and DSE.

The steps to make a complaint in the DSE are not clear, specific or user friendly. The fact sheets re the complaints process are easier to understand than the Standards. Part 8 in the Guidelines re harassment and victimisation is very general.

It is hard for a teacher or a parent to go beyond a complaint if they have an issue due to the lack of a mechanism to address harassment. In one system, only two out of eleven complaints had follow up action implemented. The majority of cases are often not resolved. Deciding to make a complaint, to "take up the fight" is damaging for the student and the parents/caregivers.

It is possible that the complaint doesn't go further because there is resolution at a local level – which perhaps may suit the department, but not the student.

There needs to be transparency in reporting of cases raised and resolutions achieved so that systems can then see more broadly the success rate and make systematic changes if required.

Compliance: Have any of your students or parents / carers said that you were not meeting your obligations? How did you address this?

Compliance is closely tied to reasonable adjustments and there have been many situations where parents/caregivers say schools are not meeting obligations. Teachers of the Deaf have

an advocacy role. It is possible that because so many Itinerant/Visiting Teachers of the Deaf have been told by their managers to no longer engage in direct teaching, they find it difficult to advocate as they don't know the students as well as they could.

Teachers of the Deaf need to collaborate with classroom teachers and be in the classroom to observe how the student is functioning and get a sense of where they are at in their learning, especially when they are well behind their peers in their language levels. They can also see how they are coping socially as they are skilled at identifying what might be causing a particular problem. Often to achieve the goals of the individual learning plan, Teachers of the Deaf also need to work with students on an individual basis.

If Teachers of the Deaf attend school meetings with parents/caregivers and teaching staff to determine the goals of the learning plan and monitor progress, they have the opportunity to present evidence of student functioning in different areas, and to recommend appropriate goals. Parents'/caregivers' goals for their children are added. If parents/caregivers have concerns, it is much more likely to be with the school than the Teacher of the Deaf because of the close relationship and advocacy role they have. If parents/caregivers do have concerns they are not likely to refer to the DSE.

Transition: Tell us about your experience assisting a student with disability to transition from one education sector to another; for example, from school to further education.

Transition might be from one education sector to another or from school to work or further education but it is also from classroom to classroom within the same school, year level to year level, pre-school or kindergarten to primary school and from primary to secondary school.

The role of the Teacher of the Deaf is to empower the students who are DHH to be advocates for themselves. They frequently work with students who are DHH on self-advocacy skills and on developing an understanding of their hearing loss so they understand and articulate their access needs. One example of student learning is where a student who is DHH with additional learning needs interviewed universities, making sure they were aware of what she could offer them rather than focusing on her disability.

Sometimes schools and parents/caregivers have very different views about the student and what transition support is necessary or indeed, what the transition should be. Teachers of the Deaf also empower parents/caregivers because sometimes schools take the lead in transition without recognising that parents/caregivers are the expert about their child.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disability: Tell us about your experiences supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disability. How did you help them to access and participate in education? How did you consult with them and their families and carers?

Many Teachers of the Deaf have not worked with students who are DHH from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and every student completing a professional experience training rates themselves poorly in this area as a teacher and as a specialist teacher.

Those who do work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are DHH and their families demonstrate sensitivity. It is important to understand how different Aboriginal groups see a hearing loss or other disability. Considerations re schooling are:

- How conductive hearing loss is categorised, for example, is a whole of school response required? Should all students be worked with in the same way?
- Is the family transient? If so, what services are involved and is there continuity of support regardless of school placement?
- How are students progressing academically and socially in school and out of school?
- Are Aboriginal role models who are DHH available?
- Do staff fly in, fly out? It can be challenging for developing relationships and building capacity in schools when staff are only there for short periods.
- To which Aboriginal group does the student belong and what language/s are used at home?
- In determining student need, is it a social issue, a disability issue or a school issue?

Relationships with families are critical as everything discussed about their child, management of hearing loss and educational goals is viewed through this relationship. Schools need to be welcoming places for the family and the community.

It is disturbing that as a nation we haven't made gains in our recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so that relationships are equal.

Specific experiences: Access and participation in education for students with disability may be affected by other circumstances such as age, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, intersex status, ethnic origin or race, and culturally and linguistically diverse background. If you have had students with disability who were affected by other circumstances, tell us about how you helped them to access and participate in education.

Access and participation in education for students who are DHH may be affected by all the circumstances that influence hearing students: age, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, intersex status, ethnic origin or race, and culturally and linguistically diverse background.

A particular challenge at this time are students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds which include:

- A cultural sensitivity to disability which is often hidden from other family members as it is a source of shame to the family
- The need for working with interpreters in early intervention who may be unfamiliar with the terminology in audiology and deafness, or how to interact with and interpret young children's speech
- Families on a humanitarian visa where children are diagnosed at a late stage
- Families who don't identify a child with a disability as this will be seen as being a drain on society and can impact on the family being allowed to stay
- A child who is DHH and who is new to the country with no language – not only no English, but no first language. They start school without a language on which to base the learning of the curriculum and their lack of any language impacts on brain development and cognition. These children need to be introduced to English or Auslan yet these are not languages the parents/caregivers use, creating an extra layer of challenge.

- Issues with trauma because of what the student and family have been through and where they have been, for example, a student living in a tree in Africa to stay safe, and another student going deaf by listening to heavy metal in a camp because it was the only way to stay sane by blocking out the sound of gun fire.

Additional areas are:

- Trauma (often unrecognised) for students who are DHH and their families
- Students who use Auslan

When children who are DHH have no language, they need to develop a language before they can start to learn. Teachers of the Deaf are skilled in developing language. They start with determining the degree of hearing loss and how quickly assistive listening devices (hearing aids/cochlear implants) can be fitted. With these they would start by focusing on developing language through listening in small incremental stages. With or without access to hearing, Auslan would be introduced as the most direct visual way to develop language. Support will be needed, for example with an Auslan language model throughout the school day. Placement might be preferred in a mainstream school with Teachers of the Deaf on staff to facilitate access to language, whether through spoken language or signed language.

When students who use Auslan as a first language or as a preferred language need educational interpreters, these interpreters should be qualified in the Auslan language and in Auslan interpreting. They should also be certified or provisionally certified and working towards certification by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). Educational interpreters need to work closely with the classroom teacher and/or Teacher of the Deaf so that they have knowledge of the classroom content and teacher's objectives to provide accurate information at the appropriate level for the student.

COVID-19: Has COVID-19 impacted the experience of your students with disability in participating in education? Have their experiences ever been impacted by other major events, such as natural disasters?

COVID-19 impacted the experiences of students who are DHH significantly. In the future the vulnerable category should be broadened to include students who are DHH so they can continue to be together at school for their learning.

Impacts included:

- The needs of students who are DHH being the last ones considered
- In one state a sector decided online learning could only be via audio and not video because of safety concerns, reducing the opportunity for students who are DHH to lipread and gain clues from facial expressions. Special dispensation had to be sought for the use of video + audio for students who are DHH.
- For online videoing, there needed to be double the resources so another teacher could be with the student. Issues of child protection required teachers to record contact lessons to protect themselves.
- In Victoria the impact has been more severe with online learning still occurring.
- Parents/caregivers and students were not happy with the lack of adjustments and lack of differentiation in materials provided to the student.

- The most disadvantaged students have been impacted the most.
- Students felt isolated and missed their peers. Communication barriers on videoconferencing made it more difficult to connect with their peers socially during this time.
- Frustration with bandwidth and file size limitations at school/home
- Lack of existing curriculum materials available with captions and in Auslan
- Resource modifications required were often requested at short notice and were often too late to be of use to the student.
- Concern about student wellbeing and their capacity to complete the work being sent home without support.
- Students missed their friends and felt isolated, especially if their parents are unable to communicate with their own children as they are not competent in Auslan.
- Students didn't always have a device or internet access.
- Families couldn't communicate well and school staff weren't available to help them understand their school work.
- Resources shared by the school weren't accessible, for example, they were not modified to their level, videos were provided without captions or Auslan translations.
- Videoconferencing platforms used by schools for virtual live class sessions did not support access for students who are DHH.
- Schools did not make use of captioning for students to access what peers and teachers were saying.
- Students found it hard to see the Auslan interpreter on the screen as the image was too small.

We concur with the findings of Children and Young People with Disability (CYDA) *Not even remotely fair: Experiences of student with disability during COVID 19* (July 2020) about the need:

- to ensure that all students with disability are socially connected to peers with whom they can communicate and foster deep connections
- for teachers to plan and provide accessible, intentional support for students with disability and check in with them regularly regarding their learning
- for the creation of accessible online spaces that are underpinned by Universal Design for Learning

When two types of support were provided i.e., educational support such as timely provision of accessible programs with the right modifications and check ins from skilled staff, and social support, such as connection with like peers and adult role models, students were highly likely to engage well with their learning and demonstrate good wellbeing.

Recommendations:

- Students who are DHH should be considered as part of the broad group of vulnerable students.
- If students who are DHH remain at home, schools need to promptly establish and document a plan around how to support the student's wellbeing and curriculum needs and draw on advice and support from Teachers of the Deaf.

- Schools use available resources to ensure students have regular connection with like peers and staff and that the programs delivered to them are accessible and at level with any appropriate modifications included.
- Coordinate state-wide Zoom like peer sessions regularly and include role models who are DHH.
- Ensure staff with appropriate skills make regular contact with the student who is DHH and their family.
- Ensure lessons and resources are accessible and at the appropriate developmental level. This could involve:
 - creation of resources in Auslan or with captions at the local level,
 - accessing resources from a central online touchpoint
 - connecting with specialised programs
 - provision of training in VC platforms, captioning, editing etc
 - review approach to Universal Design in resource making and prioritising production of resources in Auslan
 - identify an easy captioning tool for use at the school level and provide training to staff
 - connect with, and establish regular communication protocols with, Teachers of the Deaf in each region and provide professional learning that matches the needs of their role and the student cohort they support
 - consider all departmental materials/announcements needing to be shared in Auslan for staff who are DHH in a timely manner
 - collaborate with key cluster/specialised programs for DHH students to share resources and best practice across each state

We want to know what you think about the Standards.

Are you familiar with the Standards and what they are designed to do? If so, where did you find out about the Standards?

As an organisation of professionals, we have been aware of the Disability Standards for Education since they were first mooted. After having thoroughly reviewed and responded to the 2010 and 2015 reviews of the Disability Standards, we would like to express a concern that they are too general and that individual disability needs are not addressed. We understand the need to encompass feedback from everyone but we would like to see attention paid to the recommendations from specialist teachers who are experts in the field of deaf education from birth to post-secondary school. Unlike the NDIS which does not seek experts in particular fields to advise families and work with children, Teachers of the Deaf have recognised university qualifications, for some years at Master's level.

There is a lack of respect for our expertise and our knowledge of the students in meeting Standard 1 of the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers: *Know students and how they learn*. The team reviewing the Standards should include someone with qualifications in deaf education who can assist with interpretation of the Standards for students who are DHH. There is a gap between knowledge of Standards and implementing adjustments. Specialists Teachers

of the Deaf can bridge this gap and bring the knowledge of educational need that medically-based specialists such as audiologists and speech language pathologists do not.

In line with the sentiment *Nothing about us without us*, there is a need for genuine representation of the range of experience of people who are DHH and people from CALD backgrounds.

Acknowledge the family are experts when it comes to discussions about their child.

For all children and young people to access education, schools need the knowledge of specialists, otherwise there is difficulty in providing a service which targets areas of needs: *you don't know what you don't know*.

We believe there needs to be adjustments to the DSE Guidance Notes to provide elaboration of the points discussed.

Have you received training of any kind about the Standards? What did this involve?

In some states there is training about the DDA and the Standards in pre-service teacher courses. Students may also be required to show inclusive practices and differentiation in lesson planning. University courses training Teachers of the Deaf also discuss implementation of the Standards.

In most states professional development is offered to leadership teams who then discuss what they have learned with staff. This may focus on the teaching and support staff who work with students, but not front desk staff who routinely provide information to parents/caregivers. In one state every teacher needs to complete a module on disability standards. There may not be provision of a refresher course and there appears to be considerable variation across different states and territories.

In other states training is managed through online courses or webinars. They may link to the NCCD website where there are 8 different modules which are easy to follow.

Teachers of the Deaf include reference to the DDA and the DSE in presentations to, and discussions with, school staff.

There are different levels of accountability but this is not systematic across the country. One state provided a training package for "on the same basis" but this is no longer mandated.

We recommend that:

- every teacher, including replacement teachers, needs to complete a module on the Standards which could be linked to the NCCD website.
- this training be a requirement of registration bodies for provisional teachers.
- modules be developed for discrete disabilities to broaden understanding of
 - reasonable adjustments
 - on the same basis
- training provided to parents/caregivers so they understand and use the same language

Do you understand your obligations when it comes to students with disability being able to access and participate in education? How have the Standards helped you to understand your obligations?

Do you feel confident negotiating and implementing a reasonable adjustment? Do you know how to determine if this would result in unjustifiable hardship?

As an organisation of professionals, we understand our obligations and our work involves working collaboratively to ensure classroom teachers ensure DHH can access and participate in education. Leaders in schools have an understanding of their obligations.

We are focused on the needs of students who are DHH and feel confident in negotiating and implementing reasonable adjustments.

We articulate understanding when we write reports and recommend adjustments for students who are DHH to be implemented in school or in assessments. We contribute to a student's individual learning plan and the documentation of recommended adjustments. In some states, parents/caregivers are part of the process of developing learning plans but in other states they are not, and the plan may not be shared with parents/caregivers. It is important that parents/caregivers understand and contribute to adjustments which are recommended for their child.

There can be a gap between what is recommended and its implementation. Adjustments may not be enacted without specialist teachers involved and modelling the adjustment. However, adjustments may not be maintained over time and with many Itinerant/Visiting Teachers now told their role is consultation, not direct teaching, there is limited opportunity to influence teacher practice.

Some states have devolved accountability to principals so there is no scrutiny and no accountability for, for example, the use of funding provided for the support of students with disabilities.

We are aware of particular adjustments that schools claim would result in unjustifiable hardship: real time captioning and full-time interpreters. In the past a full time captioner would have cost \$100,000.00 per year, which at the time was equivalent to a teacher's salary. These options rely on changes in teacher practice and process implementation so that not only are teachers' voices captioned, but also students' voices. All states provide funding for students with disabilities, but the amount in some states is not sufficient to employ a full-time Auslan interpreter so schools either top up the funding, or make decisions about what subjects will not be interpreted. We understand that individual schools, particularly smaller schools, may not have the capacity to add extra funds. However, systems do have the funding to cover these access requirements.

The criterion for **unjustifiable hardship** needs to be clearer regarding what evidence warrants as unjustifiable hardship.

The criterion for unjustifiable hardship seems to be often applied at the point of enrolment when a school says it doesn't have the capacity to cater for the student's needs. Examples provided by parents include: "We don't have funding for..." or "X school has more experience they already have the staff". If parents are aware of their rights, they can assert their right to enrol their child in the school. It is up to the education system to work with the school to provide the necessary supports for the student. It is only under exceptional circumstances that an enrolment

be denied. However, parents when faced with such comment seldom pursue enrolment in the school.

Do you think the Standards help students with disability to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability? Why, or why not?

The Standards have the potential to help students with disability to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability, but schools do not always implement reasonable adjustments consistently. As outlined in the response to online learning under COVID, adjustments were not considered at all.

If parents/caregivers know about the Standards and have the capacity to act as advocates with tenacity, this provides them with the opportunity to have conversations with the principal and staff.

Senior secondary students in particular need to be taught about the Standards, their rights under the DDA, how to advocate for themselves, the adjustments that work best for them, or how tweaks to adjustments might assist further. They will develop confidence in asking for adjustments or special provision in tertiary settings.

Students might need to be supported in their attempts at self-advocacy, especially with Year 12 coordinators and other staff who lack understanding that students are doing well *because of* supports. This need for supports should also translate to exams, and support for any application for special provision.

There is a gap in teachers and leaders understanding what the term “on the same basis” means, and that adjustments, particularly in assessments, are not being unfair to other students.

Do you think the Standards help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disability to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability? Tell us why you think this.

The Standards should help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disability to access and participate in education and training on the same basis as students without disability if enacted but a lack of knowledge, capacity and understanding often means the Standards are not enacted.

It is important to increase our knowledge to understand how disability is viewed in different communities.

The Standards are part of the broader issue of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students accessing education on the same basis as other students generally, not just for students with disabilities.

Teachers of the Deaf build trust with parents/caregivers from the child’s diagnosis through hearing screening, then accompanying the family throughout their child’s education over a long period of time. However, cultural norms may mean not all information about the Standards ‘gels’ with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, for example a response such as “they’ll be OK” reflects belonging to their community.

We need to work from a basis of “what will work for you?” to include parents/caregivers in the education process. *Nothing about us without us* means Elders who know their own people

should be listened to. They are the experts with lived experience. There is also a place to bring in people from community with an educational background to give advice.

The Sound Scouts app has resulted in the identification of more students with hearing loss. Many young children and students may still have ear health and resultant hearing loss but are undetected and thus schools don't have the strategies or equipment such as sound field systems in place to help them access learning. Support for the teachers to learn more about the implication of conductive hearing loss and ear health issues is recommend. Specialist Teachers of the Deaf have expertise in this area and can recommend programs such as *Deadly Ears can Listen and Learn* from Queensland and other credible programs, but there has not been a great uptake. Schools are unaware of the importance of such professional learning and the importance of it.

This Review will help us to consider if we need to improve the Standards and how they are used and implemented. We want to know how you think the Standards could be improved.

How do you think the Standards could be improved to help overcome barriers for students with disability in accessing or participating in education?

We believe there is a need to be more explicit about the wide range of reasonable adjustments that could be considered for students who are DHH in their education and for assessment. We also believe that schools generally do not understand what "on the same basis" means because of the frequent comment that adjustments are not fair on the other students.

We recommend that input be sought from experts in the provision of education to students who are DHH and we would be pleased to meet to discuss the development of additional support materials.

The key task is for the Standards to be implanted in education on a daily basis.

There is a need for clear recommendations that schools with students who are DHH do not just consult, but work with Teachers of the Deaf to improve practice and build capacity in classroom teachers.

The measures for compliance are good but the beginning statement "Measures that the education provider *may* implement..." is not strong enough. There needs to be a clearer statement that specialised services such as that provided by Teachers of the Deaf must be involved.

There needs to be some discussion that compliance with the Standards is documented and verified. Currently, boxes can be ticked but in everyday teaching, adjustments are not implemented. Providers must consult with students and their family, but at the present time they can decide not to.

Teachers employed by education departments cannot be involved in taking complaints to departments, although they can remind schools of their obligations. There are times when there have been negative repercussions for Teachers of the Deaf and by extension the students with whom they work and their families.

Complaints therefore need to be raised by parents/caregivers who may not have the wherewithal to advocate so strongly for their child and quote the DDA or DSE. They are often

not prepared for the fight – and it is a fight – for a protracted period of time. This should not be an outcome of the measures for compliance with the Standards. Education departments need to have a system in place where investigations and mediations can occur and provision of adjustments modified.

Some states have signposts for schools to improve practice such as including adjustments in school documentation of implementation plans which are enacted on a daily basis. This process can be supported by individual learning plans which are a good reflection of each individual student and the adjustments they need.

Do the Standards need changing? If so, please let us know how you would change them.

7.3 in the Standards needs to replace the term “an associate of the student” with a requirement for consultation with specialist educators such as Teachers of the Deaf when considering children and young people with hearing loss of any degree.

Recommendations included elsewhere in this document are listed here:

- Students who are DHH should be considered as part of the broad group of vulnerable students.
- If students who are DHH remain at home, schools need to promptly establish and document a plan around how to support the student’s wellbeing and curriculum needs and draw on advice and support from Teachers of the Deaf.
- Schools use available resources to ensure students have regular connection with like peers and staff and that the programs delivered to them are accessible and at level with any appropriate modifications included.
- Coordinate state-wide Zoom like peer sessions regularly and include role models who are DHH.
- Ensure staff with appropriate skills make regular contact with student who is DHH and the family.
- Ensure lessons and resources are accessible and at the appropriate developmental level.

This could involve:

- creation of resources in Auslan or with captions at the local level
- accessing resources from a central online touchpoint
- connecting with specialised programs
- provision of training in VC platforms, captioning, editing etc.
- review approach to Universal Design in resource making and prioritising production of resources in Auslan.
- identify an easy captioning tool for use at the school level and provide training to staff
- connect with, and establish regular communication protocols with Teachers of the Deaf in each region and provide professional learning that matches the needs of their role and the student cohort they support
- consider all departmental materials/announcements needing to be shared in Auslan for staff who are DHH in a timely manner
- collaborate with key cluster/specialised programs for children and young people who are DHH to share resources and best practice across each state.

- Every teacher, including replacement teachers, needs to complete a module on the Standards which could be linked to the NCCD website.
- This training be a requirement of registration bodies for provisional teachers.
- Modules be developed for discrete disabilities to broaden understanding of
 - reasonable adjustments
 - on the same basis
- Training should be provided to parents/caregivers so they understand and use the same language.
- Input should be sought from experts in the provision of education to students who are DHH and we would be pleased to meet to discuss the development of additional support materials.

What should be done to improve awareness of the Standards?

To improve awareness of the Standards there could be:

- more advertising of links to existing modules
- monitored training
- a link to teacher registration
- an expectation that the adjustments being implemented for students who are DHH and other strategies for inclusion be included in each teacher's annual review process
- modelling from leaders and experts such as Teachers of the Deaf in various scenarios, and in usual circumstances such as COVID where planning can occur to include adjustments
- work distributed state-wide needs to reflect adjustments such as captions and Auslan interpreting, so this becomes embedded practice as an access issue systematically and responsibility for this work doesn't sit with people working in the disability sector
- good positive examples of implementation of the Standards. We would welcome being involved in this process.

Do you need more or different support to help you to understand and apply the Standards?
What kind of support would be useful?

A great deal of information is on the NCCD website. Schools could be directed to this to help them support implementation of the Standards at a particular point in time.

"Reasonable adjustments" and "on the same basis" need specific explanations and long lists of possible adjustments to help schools understand that adjustments will vary for each individual student. It will also help teachers understand that the focus always needs to be the specific student who is DHH they are working with so that they are not just addressing surface needs. It is often said that mainstream teachers who have worked with a student who is DHH have worked with that one student. The next student who is DHH may be very different and adjustments may need to be different to match the needs for this particular student.

Do you find the Guidance Notes for the Standards useful? If not, why not?

The Guidance Notes are helpful but we suggest there be an advisory process where advocacy bodies could provide a range of examples that could be referred to as a support for teachers

and leaders in mainstream schools. This would include examples for supporting children and young people across the spectrum of hearing loss.

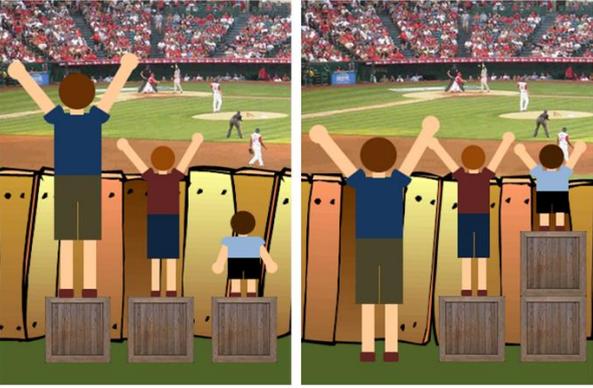
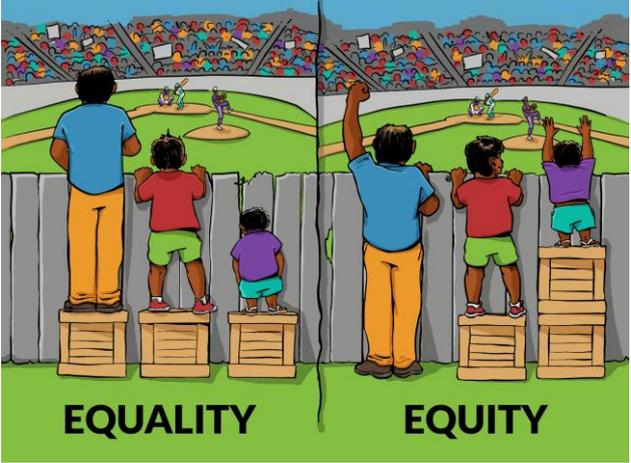
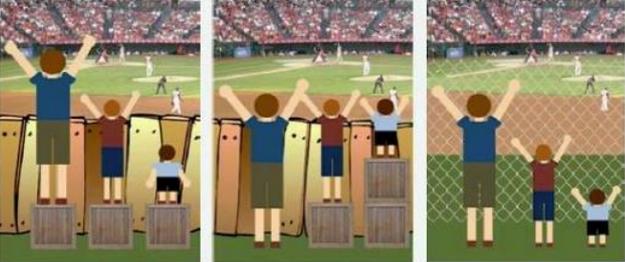
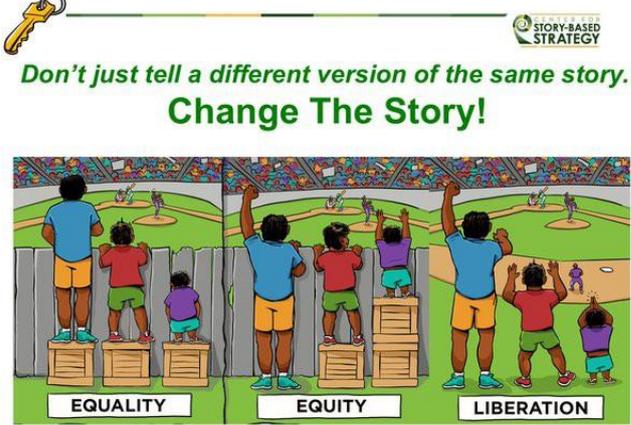
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Appendix A

The first example is the original example drawn by Craig Froehle's. The website below outlines variations that have been made by others.

From: <https://medium.com/@CRA1G/the-evolution-of-an-accidental-meme-ddc4e139e0e4>

	
<p>https://medium.com/@CRA1G/the-evolution-of-an-accidental-meme-ddc4e139e0e4</p>	<p>http://i2.wp.com/interactioninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IISC_EqualityEquity.png?zoom=2&resize=730%2C547</p>
<p>EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY</p>  <p>In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.</p> <p>In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.</p> <p>In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.</p>	 <p>Don't just tell a different version of the same story. Change The Story!</p>
<p>https://miro.medium.com/max/582/1*a8Zr3KWA XMif63uL1zkWLg.png</p>	<p>https://miro.medium.com/max/600/1*owl5RUC kVYPzZi9tuyC54Q.jpeg</p>